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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused June 26 news coverage on the Ma Ying-jeou Administration's new measures to liberalize financial regulations vis-a-vis Mainland China; on China's Taiwan Affairs Office Director Wang Yi's remarks Monday regarding Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization; and on President Ma's meeting with U.S. investment specialist Jim Rogers Wednesday. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" carried a banner headline on page two reading "U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense: China's Military Intimidation against Taiwan is Deteriorating."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said that Taiwan should stop fantasizing that it could enjoy greater international space simply by resuming negotiations with Beijing. An op-ed in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said that Ma has failed to come up with a concrete plan that can both consolidate Taiwan's sovereignty and improve cross-strait relations. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" urged Ma to adjust its "China first" policy for fear that Taiwan's security relations with the United States and Japan would be compromised. End summary.

A) "Zero-Sum Sovereignty Struggle across the Taiwan Strait"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (6/26):

"... China's ossified concept of its absolute sovereignty has impaired Taiwan's rights and interests in exchanging information with other countries in the world about epidemic prevention, which could harm Taiwan severely and which has aroused resentment among the Taiwan people. [President] Ma Ying-jeou's cross-strait policy has, for a while, created illusions for many people who believe [that Ma's policy] could more or less change China's tough attitude [toward Taiwan]. The remarks by [China's Taiwan Affairs Office Director] Wang Yi [Monday that China does not accept Taiwan's formal participation in the World Health Organization], however, have once again crushed [the Taiwan people's] wishful thinking. For both sides of the Taiwan Strait, there is still a long and difficult way to go regarding [their negotiations over] the sovereignty issue.

"Taiwan must keep its head clear. First, if [Taiwan] decides to separate politics from economics, it should just talk about economic issues with the other side of the Strait. Issues that involve sovereignty, such as [Taiwan's] international space, are about politics, so [Taiwan] can put it aside for the time being, or else it will be a mix, rather than separation, of politics and economics.

Second, it is fine to talk about political issues regarding sovereignty, but then it really depends on what Taiwan is capable of offering [in the negotiation]. It could be 'one China with respective interpretations,' arms procurement [from the United States], or [Taiwan's] relations with the United States and Japan, etc. China regards sovereignty as something supremely sublime, and what can Taiwan give in exchange for something so sublime? Being overly naive would not be endearing, but rather a grievous error."

B) "Ma's One-Track Cross-Strait Policy"

Yao Jen-to, Assistant Professor at Taiwan's National Tsing Hua University's Graduate Institute of Sociology, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (6/26):

"... The [Ma] government has yet to tell the public how it intends to handle these challenges [in terms of cross-strait relations]. What is clear is that the KMT has a fixed track in mind for cross-strait relations. Following this, Taiwan and China would inevitably get closer. This is not a big problem; the problem is what will happen once this has happened. Putting aside contentious issues such as whether Ma should be addressed as "President Ma" or "Mr. Ma," the question remains: Where will this track lead us?

"If what Ma really wants is unification with China, the KMT's plan should remain unchanged. However, if Ma intends to keep the promises he made in his inaugural speech and work to safeguard the dignity and sovereignty of Taiwan, or the Republic of China, he should propose a concrete plan to consolidate public consensus on Taiwan's independence and sovereignty while pushing it toward China. Over the past month, we have seen the latter, but not the former. ..."

C) "Ma Must Adjust 'China First' Line"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (6/26):

"... Perhaps the most worrisome indication of the direction of the new KMT government's 'adjustment' of Taiwan's external policy direction concerns numerous news media reports that the Ma government had asked the United States to 'delay' public announcement of a new package of advanced defensive weaponry to Taiwan until after this month's talks between the quasi-official Strait Exchange Foundation and Beijing's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait. In the wake of Taiwan's democratization, both the former KMT government under ex-president Lee Teng-hui and the former president Chen Shui-bian's Democratic Progressive Party administration had believed that close relations with both the US and Japan were the bedrock of Taiwan's national security strategy, and that Taiwan could enhance its strategic position in the Asia-Pacific and gain greater flexibility to engage the PRC through deepening robust security ties with Washington and Tokyo.

"The reports of this request by Ma's national security team sent a ringing message to Washington that his government will decide its US policy based on the state of relations with the authoritarian PRC regime in a dramatic reversal of the strategic priorities of the Taiwan government since 1988. ... Moreover, we sincerely urge President Ma to reconsider his decision to prioritize cross-strait relations over foreign affairs, a policy that has already effectively become tantamount to the abandonment of Taiwan's independent diplomacy.

"Even if supporters of Ma's policy maintain that Taiwan will be unable to upgrade its international status or expand its international participation without friendly cross-strait ties with the PRC, the KMT government's current stance has handed Beijing effective control over Taipei's diplomacy and national defense policies and has spawned grave doubts about Taiwan's new strategic direction in Washington and Tokyo and in the capitals of our 23 official diplomatic partners. ... Since its strategy does not enjoy public consensus and has triggered growing doubts among our traditional allies and has already begun to harm the fabric of Taiwan's democracy, we believe that the Ma government should reconsider its policy of putting relations with the PRC 'above everything' and return to its promise to 'put Taiwan first.'"

YOUNG